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TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [PINR](#) [NU](#)
SUBJECT: NICARAGUAN JUSTICE SYSTEM AT RISK, ACCORDING TO
SOLICITOR GENERAL

Classified By: Ambassador Paul Trivelli for reasons 1.4 (b and d)

¶1. (C) Embassy officials and INR analysts met with Ivan Lara, the Solicitor General for the Criminal Division on 21 March. According to Lara, the Nicaraguan justice system is deteriorating. He highlighted the enormous pressure to politicize the Solicitor General's office and judiciary, and the blurring between state and party. Each government institution basically reports to a member of the governing party, the Sandinista National Liberation Front (FSLN); the Solicitor General's office answers to Lenin Cerna and is "oriented" by him. All the solicitors were given a sheet to sign pledging allegiance to the policies of the state/party. Several Assistant Solicitors have quit -- including the head of the environmental division. Lara equated the current situation to a "witch hunt" to track down the anti-Sandinistas in the organization. He added that phone calls of intimidation from the FSLN are common.

¶2. (C) Lara stated his commitment to stay in his position and remain independent but he does not know how long he will be able to last, although he does not feel overt pressure on him to quit at this time. Lara believes the CENI (debt bonds) case against Eduardo Montealegre will be taken from his unit and handed to the finance division, where the Solicitor General and the FSLN party overseers can exercise more control over the management of the case.

¶3. (C) Lara shared examples of general corruption within the judiciary as well as illegitimate property seizures. According to Lara, the FSLN customarily hires someone to file a complaint claiming they were an employee for "X" firm for 15 years, but never paid. In one case a year and a half ago, an American land owner was accused of owing \$24,000 in back wages to the fictitious employee. Such "cases" are decided quickly and since the land owner does not have the cash at the time of the decision to "pay the employee," the land owner's property is auctioned. In the case Lara mentioned, the FSLN party treasurer appeared with cash in hand and paid \$24,000 for the land. The FSLN as a party now owns the land and gets to keep the payment to the "employee."

¶4. (C) Lara commented that Nicaraguan National Police Chief Aminta Granera answers to the FSLN and is something of a "yes woman" although she opposes corruption. He stated that Rosario Murillo now controls the budget for communications and publicity which means that the Solicitor General has no money to publicize its anti-corruption hotline. Lara believes that the line may be shut down.
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